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## United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR,  
AND PENSIONS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6300

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November 7, 2023

The Honorable Ambassador Pamela K. Hamamoto  
U.S. Negotiator for the Pandemic Accord  
U.S. Mission to International Organizations  
11, Route de Pregny  
Case Postale 2354  
1211 Geneva 2  
Switzerland

Dear Ambassador Hamamoto:

I recently welcomed the Biden administration's announcement to require "reasonable pricing" for a next-generation monoclonal antibody developed by the pharmaceutical company Regeneron. As you lead negotiations over the World Health Organization Pandemic Accord, I urge you to build on this precedent, and push for inclusion of strong pricing and access standards in this international agreement.

In my view, pharmaceutical companies should not be allowed to charge outrageous prices for products developed with taxpayer dollars. Further, when the public funds information that can help end a pandemic, it should not be kept a secret.

Our goal should be to make tests, treatments, and vaccines for the next public health outbreak available to every man, woman and child who needs them as soon as possible. The life of a millionaire in New York City is not worth more than the life of a person living in extreme poverty in South Sudan.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, we saw vast inequalities in access to COVID-19 tests, treatments and vaccines. Nobody really knows how many people died because pharmaceutical companies charged outrageous prices and refused to share taxpayer-funded technology to expand global production. But one study published in *Nature* estimated that the failure to make COVID vaccines widely accessible throughout the world cost 1.3 million lives by the end of 2021.

Clearly, we must do better. Lifesaving vaccines that cost a few dollars to produce should be available and accessible to everyone regardless of their income or where they were born.

Now is the time to negotiate strong global standards that put public health over profits. The U.S. should champion including reasonable pricing and technology sharing requirements into all

funding agreements with pharmaceutical companies. That is not just the right thing to do. It is the smart thing to do to protect the American people from viruses that respect no borders.

Consider the disastrous case of Moderna. It is widely acknowledged that both Moderna and the U.S. National Institutes of Health created the COVID vaccine together. U.S. taxpayers spent \$12 billion on the research, development and procurement of the vaccine. Yet Moderna refused to share its technology with other manufacturers to increase global production, charged some poorer countries more for doses than wealthy countries, and then quadrupled the price of the COVID vaccine to \$128—at a time when it costs just \$2.85 to manufacture that vaccine.

Ambassador Hamamoto: The mistakes made with Moderna cannot be repeated. A public health crisis should not be an opportunity for profiteering. We need real international cooperation and commitment to ensuring equitable access to pandemic products.

I urge you to push for strong pricing and access standards, and support the call of developing countries working to make sure that everyone gets the tests, treatments, and vaccines they need. I look forward to receiving regular updates.

Sincerely,



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Bernard Sanders

Chair

U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

cc:

The Honorable Antony Blinken, U.S. Secretary of State

The Honorable Xavier Becerra, U.S. Secretary of Health & Human Services